

# THE COMMUNIST PARTY

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To every Member of the Communist Party

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## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

DEAR COMRADE,

This summer of 1945 it will be twenty-five years since our Party was founded.

Our twenty-fifth anniversary falls in the year of victory over Fascism, the establishment of new democratic governments in many countries of Europe, and a great swing to the Left in Britain. In spite of all Tory tricks at the General Election, this is bound to result in a substantial increase in Labour and Communist representation in the House of Commons, giving new power to the Labour Movement.

### A Proud Record

In the long struggle through which these gains have been won, our Party has a proud record.

It came into being in 1920 to weld together the Marxist groups in Britain, so that they could work more effectively to strengthen the organisation, unity and Socialist purpose of the Labour Movement in the fight for the cause of the working class and of the mass of the people.

The British Socialist Party, the largest of the organisations which merged to form the Communist Party, had for many years been affiliated to the Labour Party. But when the newly-formed Communist Party applied for affiliation to the Labour Party, its application was refused, and in 1925 the Labour Party Conference, following the lead of Ramsay MacDonald, adopted new rules excluding Communists from individual membership of the Labour Party or from acting as delegates from any affiliated society to the Labour Party. Thus the working-class movement was split, and remains split to this day.

In every great struggle of the years between the Wars our Party was in the vanguard. Its members in every industry were among the foremost fighters to defend and improve wages and conditions, to build up the Trade Unions in the factories and pits. Our Party played a great part in the struggles of the unemployed, against the Means Test, for higher rates of benefit, for a policy that would give work. It fought against high rents, for decent housing and living conditions. It fought for the democratic rights of the people, against capitalist class "justice," against the Trade Disputes Act, against Mosley and his thugs. On every issue facing the people it gave the lead that served to rally

them, through its weekly papers and, since 1930, the *Daily Worker*. It built up a propaganda literature that was without parallel among British working-class organisations.

Our Party came into being also to rally the working class and the people of Britain for the fight against war, against the causes of war, against the terrible conditions that were the outcome of war. It fought ceaselessly against the reactionaries who time and again tried to plunge Britain into war against the Socialist Soviet Union. It fought for freedom for Ireland, India, China, against the British monopolist exploitation of the colonial peoples. When the rise of Fascism in Germany threatened world war, our Party urged national and international unity against the aggressors. It strove to rouse Britain against the Japanese attack on China, and against the Italian conquest of Abyssinia; when the fascist invasion of Spain threatened the democratic Spanish Republic our Party organised the British Battalion of the International Brigade, and 250 of its members fell on the battlefields of Spain.

From the first, our Party saw clearly that fascist victory in Spain would be the prelude to further Nazi aggression and a new world war. It strove for working-class unity, and for a People's Front against the Chamberlain Government whose policy was leading inevitably to war. It urged friendship with the Soviet Union and a Peace Front against Fascist aggression.

This policy won increasing support, but we were unable to win the whole Labour Movement for it. The anti-fascist forces remained divided, and Chamberlain was able to continue the Munich anti-Soviet policy even after war came, in the form of the "phoney" war against Hitler, and support for Finland against the Soviet Union. The Red Army's quick victory against Finland defeated the British-French plans for switching the war against Russia; and when Hitler attacked in the West and France fell, public opinion—which our consistent propaganda against the Munichites had done much to strengthen—compelled the replacement of Chamberlain by Churchill. But Chamberlain and his friends remained in the Government, continuing to influence its policy in a pro-fascist and anti-Soviet direction. Our Party therefore pressed for the clearing out of the Munichites and the transformation of the Government into a real People's Government and an alliance with the Soviet Union. In the blitz period we worked, with considerable success, to strengthen the morale of the people and to get the shelter conditions improved.

At last the Munichite influence in the Government was overcome when the Hess offer was rejected in May, 1941, and Churchill declared for the alliance with the Soviet

Union when it was attacked in June, 1941. From that moment, which marked the clear transformation of British policy from Munich into a full anti-fascist policy and international alliance with all anti-fascist countries, our Party supported the Government, while always striving to expose and defeat the surviving Munichite tendencies, especially in connection with the delay in opening the Second Front. We campaigned for increased war production, and our proposal for Joint Production Committees became Government policy. We did everything to strengthen unity at home and abroad in the fight against fascism.

The record of our Party through these twenty-five years is one that should fill every member of the Party with pride and confidence, and with the determination to carry the Party forward to new achievements in the years to come.

## Now our Party Faces New Tasks

The tasks which face our Party in the coming years are largely new. The defeat and destruction of Fascism, of the most reactionary sections of the big monopolists, opens out for the people of Britain no less than of other countries opportunities of democratic advance which can end the long decades of poverty, unemployment and war, and open the way to Socialism.

There are some groups in and around the Labour Movement who do not see these opportunities. They do not even realise the great victory that has been won. Lacking faith in the working class, they raise slogans that would distract the Labour Movement from "the next link in the chain" and divide it from the mass of the people.

There is no virtue in fighting against the stream when it is carrying us forward to our goal. As Lenin said in 1918, when the Leftists advanced slogans that would have meant disaster: "Fits of hysteria are of no use to us. What we need is the steady march of the iron battalions of the proletariat."

For the first time outside the Soviet Union, the peoples have it in their power to shape the future by solid, democratic advances. They fight now for positive gains that will set public before private interests, and raise the whole economic, political and cultural level of their nation. They fight to win.

This is the message and the inspiration which the Party has to give to the people of Britain.

It is not necessary in this letter to repeat the detailed programme of the Party, which has been worked out in *Britain For The People*, in Harry Pollitt's *How To Win The Peace*, and in a number of special memoranda. We aim rather at expressing the general purpose of our policy, and making the membership confident of the ability of our Party, through the joint work of us all, and in and with the whole Labour Movement, to realise our common aims.

The specially unique feature of the present period is the co-operation of the Socialist with the Capitalist world in order to make good the devastation of the War, to maintain peace, and to remove the political, economic and social causes of war.

We, above all, must recognise the enormous growth of

the democratic forces which has made this co-operation possible and will make it real and lasting. Communist leadership and Socialism have given the Soviet Union colossal strength and influence. The Communist Parties in other European countries have played a magnificent part in cementing the unity of their nations in the fight against the Nazi invaders; they are in the national governments already formed, and the elections in many of those countries will undoubtedly result in considerable Communist and Socialist majorities. In Britain, the Labour Movement's strength and influence have grown considerably, and the Communist Party, though still excluded from the Labour Party, has made a great contribution to this growth.

All this represents a fundamental change in the relation of class forces in the world, as anyone can realise by comparing it with the situation after the last war. Our Party has to take note of this change, and to frame its policy accordingly. Our Party, more than any other, is concerned to see that Britain makes a positive contribution to realising the aims of the United Nations. We have set before the people of Britain a practical programme which is in harmony with these aims. We have to work with all sections of the nation prepared to help in carrying out this programme, precisely because the greatest possible combination of forces is necessary to defeat those who oppose these aims and who will take advantage of every division among the supporters of the Crimea Conference decisions in order to prevent their application in British policy.

Our policy does not mean the end of political struggle, but a sharper political struggle than ever before. We are no longer, however, conducting this political struggle as a small minority; the work of Communists has helped to bring about a situation, both at home and on a world scale, in which it is the most reactionary sections that are isolated, and Communists are able to play a part in the wide, progressive movement of the majority of the people.

The Communist Party, thanks to its Marxist approach to events, was able over and over again to put forward the policy which history has shown to be correct, and to organise and guide the fight for it. In this new situation, the Communist Party is best able to understand what needs to be done, and to organise and guide the most consistent political struggle for the public interest as against the private interests of the reactionary monopolists.

For success in this struggle, three conditions are necessary.

## The Basis of Success : Strengthen our Party

At this moment, when the Labour Movement is facing a new historical period and new responsibilities, our Party, with its Marxist outlook and faith in the masses, has a part to play which no other organisation can fill.

Our Party is now fifty thousand strong. Among its members are men and women holding honoured positions in the Trade Unions and in the factories and pits, in the railway and transport services, in the Co-operative Move-



ment, in the field of science, education, medicine and the artistic professions; and men and women who in the course of this War have won distinction in the armed forces, merchant service and civil defence. It represents to a higher degree than ever before the working people of the country, the people on whom the future of Britain depends.

But our Party's responsibility is now so great, the tasks facing it are so many and varied, that the first condition for its successful future work is a rapid increase in membership.

The return of the forces to civilian life, and the opening out of vigorous political activity on all the issues of the peace, give new opportunities which our members must be quick to seize.

We must recruit great numbers of members from sections of the population which are now inadequately represented in our Party, such as agricultural and textile workers, farmers and small shopkeepers and business people, seamen and fishermen, as well as greatly strengthening our membership in industries and professions already well represented. Hundreds of new branches must be established in parts of the country we have not as yet been able to reach.

This strengthening of our Party and of the Young Communist League is the very foundation on which we can build the success of our policy and the realisation of our programme.

## Labour-Communist Unity

The second condition of success is to break down the barriers that still remain between the Communist Party and other organisations in the Labour Movement. In carrying forward our work for unity, we must draw confidence from what we have already succeeded in winning. Only a handful of Trade Unions still exclude Communists from holding official positions. The ban against Communist delegates to Trades Councils has gone. In many areas there has been united action with the Labour Party in every aspect of the Election campaign.

What are the principal barriers that still remain to be overcome?

There is the Labour Party's refusal to accept Communist members of Trade Unions as delegates to any Labour Party organisation or conference, or as Labour candidates in parliamentary or local elections.

Then there are the bans on members of the Labour Party speaking on the same platforms as Communists, or taking part in committees which include Communists.

And finally, there is the continued refusal to accept the affiliation of the Communist Party to the Labour Party.

Those Labour Party bans are entirely out of harmony with the situation in which, in almost every country of Europe, Communists are working closely with Socialists and are represented alongside Socialists in the governments of their countries. There can be no real national unity unless its core is Labour-Communist unity. There can be

no effective fight against reaction in Britain unless its core is Labour-Communist unity.

Therefore our Party must work harder than ever for the removal of existing bans and for affiliation to the Labour Party, as well as for electoral agreements covering both parliamentary and local elections.

## Build up The Mass Organisations

The third condition of success is the strengthening of every section of the Labour Movement, in numbers, unity and activity. Our Party has a magnificent record in this work, reflected in the leading elected positions in the Trade Unions held by so many of our members.

But in spite of past successes, the fact is that less than half of the workers are organised industrially. There is still a great deal to be done, and the work will need all the closer attention because of the conditions: demobilisation and the new jobs so many workers will be taking up, the immense scale of transfers from one industry to another, the great numbers of women who will remain in industry, and the character of the issues relating to wages and conditions which the return to peace industry will bring.

Co-operative Societies, which already embrace over half the working-class families, now have great new opportunities to extend democratic organisation in the service of the people's needs. Our Party must help in this work, and in promoting close relations between Co-operative and other working-class organisations.

Our Party has also to strive to strengthen the Trades Councils and Labour Parties and make the united Labour Movement in the localities a really vigorous one, that can guarantee victory both in parliamentary and in municipal elections.

While always seeing it as our first task to build up the organisations associated with the Labour Movement, our Party must also do everything in its power to encourage and work with other mass organisations which embrace large numbers of working people, such as the British Legion; and to establish friendly co-operation with all organisations and individuals working for the same immediate aim.

## The General Election

The General Election has been a test for our Party. Both in the constituencies where we put forward candidates and in others where we supported Labour, the Party membership has done a magnificent job. Whatever the results, we are confident that our Party's work in the campaign will have greatly strengthened the whole Labour Movement and laid the basis for future progress.

We have also to bear in mind the need for similar work in the local elections that will follow the General Election.

The changes in Party organisation and the new approach to the activity of Party members outlined in the report of the Organisation Commission, and now being put into

operation throughout the Party, should help considerably both in the organisation of electoral work and in broadening the general character of the Party's activities. At the same time, comrades must realise that the work in the factories must be not only continued but strengthened.

## Conclusion

When our Party was formed in 1920, it was joined by men and women who had splendid militant records in the Labour Movement and were active workers in the Marxist groups of that period. But they had to build up a Communist Party able to overcome sectarian differences and to work in an organised way; they had to learn, while fighting against the opportunist tendencies then dominating the Labour Movement, also to fight against "leftist" tendencies which would have isolated the Party from the mass of the workers.

In the course of its twenty-five years of existence our Party has grown to maturity. Its collective experience, its understanding of Marxism, its ability to respond to changing situations, its organisation and its activity, are not the possession of individuals or groups, but of the whole Party, itself the most valuable asset of the Labour Movement of which it forms a part.

While we take pride in our Party and what it has achieved, we must all be conscious of the great new tasks which the present situation places before the Party. Lenin always insisted that the Communist Party "must be able to

master **all** forms or sides of social activity without exception." This is exceptionally important for us now, when our task is to unite and help forward millions of the British people, whose democratic power can and will shape the future.

Therefore we must overcome all the traces of narrowness that still exist in the Party; we must move everywhere among the people with confidence and understanding of their outlook and interests, but always able to help them to understand the political, economic and social issues of the day as these affect their welfare.

If we can act in this way, if we can help the people to understand how they can help themselves; if we play a part worthy of Communists in rallying the democratic forces of Britain against the reactionaries, the coming years will see not only a far stronger Communist Party but a stronger, more prosperous and more progressive Britain, helping to remove the political, economic and social causes of war, and advancing rapidly along the road to Socialism.

That is the call we make to you for the 25th Anniversary of our Party's formation, and we are confident that you will respond.

Yours fraternally,

**THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**